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IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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For immediate release

- 1. DNR issues nation's first air permit with mercury limits**
- 2. Winds kick up unhealthy dust levels in Mason City**
- 3. March 1 deadline approaching for producers to submit late manure management plans**

DNR ISSUES NATION'S FIRST AIR PERMIT WITH MERCURY LIMITS

DES MOINES – Iowa DNR recently issued the nation's first air permit that controls mercury emissions. The permit was issued in June for future expansion of the MidAmerican Energy station at the Council Bluffs Energy Center, expected to be operational in 2007.

“The permit will reduce mercury emissions by at least 83 percent,” said Chris Roling, the DNR engineer who issued the permit. The permit requires a “sorbent” or material such as activated charcoal powder or other material be mixed with flue gases to adsorb mercury. Fabric filters or electrostatic precipitators then collect the mercury-laden powder along with fly ash and soot.

The sorbent material used will be determined during a test period closer to plant operation. Several options beside activated charcoal are nearing commercial availability.

The DNR was able to consider the controls as a portion of the Clean Air Act kicked in that requires utilities and air pollution control agencies to look for ways to reduce mercury emissions using maximum achievable control technologies.

“Our decision is on the books and should help other states and utilities decide to utilize these same mercury controls,” said Roling. “There is a lot of research and testing of mercury controls, but we have the first permit to require controls.” Roling said MidAmerican Energy proposed using the technology in their permit application.

“Any new coal fired utilities in Iowa or elsewhere in the nation will also need mercury controls,” he said. “The technology is available and not cost prohibitive.” He noted that Wisconsin based Dairyland Power is considering building a coal-fired facility in Mitchell County, Chickasaw County or Alma, WI.

Iowa also is a national leader in non-polluting wind energy. Currently, more than 400 wind turbines can potentially produce 423 megawatts, enough electricity for more than 130,000 homes.

Airborne mercury precipitates into waterways and can accumulate in fish tissue, posing health risks, such as neurological damage and learning disabilities for developing children. Pregnant women, nursing mothers and children under the age of 15 are typically advised in many states to potentially eat limited amounts of certain fish, depending upon the species and fish size that also affect mercury concentrations.

Iowa is considering providing new health information about mercury levels in fish, using more protective standards used by many states than the current FDA standards. The information is designed to help sensitive groups of Iowans make informed choices about consumption. Women of childbearing age and children are most susceptible to the potentially harmful effects of mercury.

For more information on air pollution controls contact Brian Button at 515-281-7832.

For more information on mercury and fish contact John Olson at 515-281-8905.

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WINDS KICK UP UNHEALTHY DUST LEVELS IN MASON CITY

DES MOINES— High winds kicked up dust particles in northern Mason City Wednesday, causing air quality to reach unhealthy levels for sensitive groups, according to the DNR.

Typically, extended and prolonged outdoor exertion is needed to increase respiratory risks, said Brian Button, DNR air information specialist.

The state has an air monitor located at 17th and Washington, near two cement kilns.

Both cement manufacturers have taken steps to control not only vented emissions over the last several years, but also windblown dusts from storage piles, hauling roads and other areas. This is the first unhealthy air quality measured in Mason City since February 2002.

Under the national Air Quality Index (AQI), recent air conditions measured 104 on the index, slightly into the orange classification for “unhealthy for sensitive groups.” Prolonged, heavy exertion outdoors could increase the likelihood of symptoms in

sensitive individuals such as persons with respiratory and heart disease, the elderly and children.

The higher the color-coded AQI, the poorer the air quality. An AQI of 1 to 50 is green or good, 51 to 100 is yellow or moderate, 101 and higher is orange or unhealthy for sensitive groups, 151 and higher is red or unhealthy for everyone, 201 and higher is very unhealthy and 301 and higher is hazardous. The vast majority of days in Iowa fall into the good to moderate conditions.

Iowans can view current air quality conditions in Iowa and nationally at www.iowacleanair.com.

For more information contact Brian Button at 515-281-7832.

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MARCH 1 DEADLINE APPROACHING FOR PRODUCERS TO SUBMIT LATE MANURE MANAGEMENT PLANS

DES MOINES – Producers who are required by state law to have a manure management plan, but don't yet have one, can avoid a \$1,500 penalty by submitting the plan before March 1.

“This is a really good deal for producers who have overdue manure management plans and we want to make sure that they know time is running out,” said Gene Tinker, coordinator of the DNR animal feeding operations program.

The DNR reports that seven producers have filed these plans recently.

“I'm very concerned that many producers will be paying large penalties starting in March, when they could take advantage of this program,” Tinker said. “Only 58 manure management plans have been received since the DNR offered producers this opportunity last September.

Tinker added that the DNR has issued one administrative order and penalty to a producer that did not have the required plan.

Starting March 1, the DNR's six regional field offices will begin calling on confinement operations that potentially need the legally-required plan.

Producers who don't take advantage of this temporary immunity will be required to pay the \$1,500 penalty in addition to the \$250 filing fee and an indemnity fee.

Most producers with an animal unit capacity of more than 500 in confinement, equal to 1250 finishing swine or 500 cattle, are required to have an MMP on file with the DNR.

Information on calculating animal unit capacity and the DNR MMP forms are available on the DNR website at <http://www.state.ia.us/epd/wastewtr/feedlot/manure.htm>.

Producers with more than one site should check with the local DNR field office to see if an MMP is required, even if each facility has less than 500 animal units. Call your local DNR field office at one of the following locations:

- Manchester, 563-927-2640
- Mason City, 641-424-4073
- Spencer, 712-262-4177
- Atlantic, 712-243-1934
- Des Moines, 515-725-0268
- Washington, 319-653-2135

For more information, contact Gene Tinker, Coordinator, 515-281-3103.